

Report for Gorebridge Community Council – Councillor Jim Muirhead

Borders Rail Timetable changes

ScotRail is currently consulting on changes to their timetables which would see a reduction from 2 trains per hour to 1 train per hour at times of the day on the Borders Rail Line. The consultation ends on 1st October. This would be a backward step and would send out the wrong message completely if we are serious about getting people out of their cars. Councils and Developers, which effectively means those who purchase new housing in the area have all contributed towards the line being built. I would urge all those who are concerned about this, and the community council to respond to the consultation.

National Care Service Consultation.

Major concerns about the implications for local accountability and control that would arise if the proposals contained in this document were to go ahead. This follows on from the Feeley report which recommended a National Care Service for Scotland to achieve consistency, drive national improvements, set standards, and bring national accountability and oversight. He called for a new delivery system that built partnerships rather than marketplaces and was co-produced with people it is designed to help.

However, the proposals in the consultation go way beyond the scope of his review to include community health, primary care and potentially children's social care, criminal justice, and social work. This would take control of all these services to a national body taking away local democracy and control.

The Feeley report called for better terms and conditions for staff, but the proposals out for consultation do not include any detail on additional funding or firm commitments on pay and conditions for staff.

Here in Midlothian, we have done a lot of work improving children's social care working closely with our partners. This is true localism, accountable through local elected representatives to the public. This could be put in jeopardy if these services were to be swallowed up in a national care service. In Midlothian we have deliberately kept our Children's Services out of the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) as experience in other local authority areas has shown that it can fail to gain adequate attention when part of the HSCP.

COVID Effecting Service Deliveries

Concerns are being raised about the Council and the HSCP being able to sustain services at normal levels as we go into winter if we see COVID cases rising as a result. We are already under pressure to deliver services due to the number of staff that have either contracted Covid or are isolating because they have come into contact with someone who has.

With the relaxation of restrictions people are assuming that everything is returning to normal, however we have many members of staff who are still working in jobs that they have transferred to during the earlier wave of the pandemic.

Schools have been significantly impacted by COVID, with a large number of staff off at times, meaning that classes and lessons have been disrupted. This is a picture mirrored across most other local authority areas. It has been suggested by parents at some schools that they have not been adequately informed or contacted when there are COVID issues in the classrooms and are targeting these criticisms at school staff and Head teachers. This is completely unfair. Prior to the summer

breach local schools were responsible for risk assessing any outbreaks and under the guidance of Health Protection Scotland were responsible for notifying parents. However since the schools went back the responsibility for doing this was taken from the Schools and is now the responsibility of Health Protection Scotland through Track and Trace. They now decide on who is required to isolate and it is they who contact parents and staff affected.

Flu Jabs and COVID Vaccinations

There is to be a move away from GP's providing the Flu Jabs and this will now be handled by the HSCP. The plan is that the Flu Jab and the COVID Booster will be administered at the same appointment. The logistics concerned mean that it is not possible to provide this service in every community in Midlothian but instead they will be carried out from 3 venues in Midlothian. Gorebridge Leisure Centre, Midlothian Community Hospital and Eastfield Health Centre in Penicuik. The venues in Gorebridge and the Community Hospital will be open 7 days a week whilst the clinic in Eastfield will open over three weekends. This is due to start on 27th September. People will be sent a letter with an appointment time and venue. The letter will include details on how to change the appointment or to let the service know if they cannot get to one of the venues.

Councillor Jim Muirhead.